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ABSTRACT

A study investigated current research on approaches to instruction, modes of instruction, and foci of instruction in the teaching of writing. Surveys of students and faculty at Northeast Iowa Community College were conducted to determine the status of composition instruction with regard to approaches to and modes and foci of instruction. Thirty-three students (out of 39) in a Composition 2 class and 11 students (out of 13) in a Composition 1 class responded to the survey, while 27 faculty members (out of 47) responded to another survey designed to elicit data on faculty perceptions of writing as it applies to the needs of students in various career areas. Results of the research study and the surveys will guide the development of transfer-level writing courses at the community college. Six approaches are currently in use: literature, text-based rhetoric, peer workshop, service course, basic skills, and individualized approaches. Of the four modes of instruction identified in prior studies--the presentational, the environmental, the renamed natural process, and the individualized--the environmental mode offers the greatest potential for improving writing. Foci of instruction most likely to lead to improved writing skill are inquiry techniques, use of scales, sentence combining, models, and peer-responding. Less improvement is likely using free writing and teacher-only feedback and revision, and negative effects are likely using direct instruction in grammar and mechanics. (Nine tables of data are included; three appendixes containing surveys are attached.) (Author/SR)

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An Analysis of Research in Approaches to Instruction, Modes of Instruction, and Foci of Instruction in the Teaching of Writing at the Community College

A Research Paper

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

Karen Swenson Lee

University of Northern Iowa

May, 1991

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Abstract

Current research investigating approaches to instruction, modes of instruction, and foci of instruction in the teaching of writing was studied. Surveys of students and faculty at Northeast Iowa Community College were conducted to determine the status of composition instruction with regard to approaches to and modes and foci of instruction. Results of the research study and the surveys will guide the development of transfer-level writing courses at the community college. Six approaches are currently in use: literature, text-based rhetoric, peer workshop, service course, basic skills, and individualized approaches. Of the four modes, the environmental mode offers the greatest potential for improving writing. Foci of instruction most likely to lead to improved writing skill are inquiry techniques, use of scales, sentence combining, models, and peer-responding; with less improvement likely using free writing and teacher-only feedback and revision; and negative effects likely using direct instruction in grammar and mechanics.

Table of Contents

Chapter I - Introduction

Introduction..... 5

Statement of the Problem..... 6

Plan of the Study..... 7

Description of Student Population..... 7

Procedures for Obtaining and Analyzing Literature..... 8

Procedures for Surveying Faculty and Students 10

Definition of Terms..... 10

Significance of the Study..... 12

Chapter II - Review of Research

Introduction..... 15

White and Polin..... 15

Hillocks..... 23

Synthesis..... 31

Chapter III - Results of Surveys

Introduction..... 36

Background of the Surveys..... 36

Results of Student Survey..... 41

Results of Faculty Survey..... 46

Results of Communication Faculty Survey..... 49

Chapter IV - Discussion of Results

Introduction..... 56

Conclusions..... 66

Implications for Practice..... 66

Implications for a New Curriculum..... 69

References..... 71

Appendix A..... 73

Appendix B..... 74

Appendix C..... 77

Chapter I

Introduction

Few educators would challenge the notion that college freshmen, especially community college students, need to improve writing performance. The American Association of Community Junior Colleges' 1988 report of the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges states:

> Large numbers of community college students are "at risk" precisely because they lack proficiency in English. When we [commission members] met with faculty, they confirmed overwhelmingly that the basic problem was that so many students can't write clearly or read with comprehension. This was reinforced by a Carnegie Foundation survey that revealed that 75 percent of the community college faculty questioned felt that the academic ability of their students was "fair" or "poor". (p. 16)

The commission's report goes on to recommend, "All community college students should complete a collegiate English course with emphasis on writing" (p. 17).

The question that does generate lively debate is how the student's need for improved skill in writing is to be most effectively met. Some administrators and faculty advocate a return to a more traditional emphasis on basic skills, i.e., grammar and mechanics, while others advocate newer approaches including ungraded free writing, peer responding, and collaborative writing. Little agreement is

to be found among community college writing teachers as to the most effective methods of instructing freshmen in the community college in composition.

Statement of the Problem

The question to be researched, then, is how best to teach writing to community college freshmen. One purpose of this study is to summarize the findings of two of the most contemporary and comprehensive research projects relating to current effective practices in the teaching of composition. The findings of these researchers and other related literature will provide timely answers to the following questions:

1) What approaches are currently in use in the teaching of writing?

2) What distinguishes one approach from the other, and what is the effectiveness of each?

3) What modes of instruction are identifiable, what are their distinguishing characteristics, and what is their relative effectiveness?

4) What foci of instruction are identifiable by research, and which are most effective in improving the quality of writing at the college freshman level?

Another purpose is to learn through surveys the degree of student satisfaction with present practices in composition and to assess the general faculty's perceptions of writing. Communication faculty will be surveyed regarding modes, approaches, and foci of writing

instruction. The research findings and survey results together will provide a means of assessing the degree to which present practices are supported by research.

Plan of the Study

Description of Student Population

The average age of students at Northeast Iowa Community College is now 28 years. Many NICC students are nontraditional in other ways as well: they commute, some up to 50 miles; they generally have families, some are single parents; they often work part-time; and many are underprepared for college work. Many are experiencing career changes as a result of changing economic and employment or family conditions. In addition, many are anxious about their ability to succeed in school and even about the wisdom of their decision to "put all their eggs in the school basket," in terms of career planning. As a result, they often have low self-esteem in general and negative expectations in particular about their ability to succeed as writers. In many cases they are skeptical about the need for improved writing as a job-related skill.

Even among more traditional students, i.e., recent graduates of high school, underpreparation and uncertainty about both their ability to write and need for writing skills are the rule rather than the exception. Bouton and Rice (1983) describe a similar student population at the University of the District of Columbia. They commute, are older than average, are often part-time students, and their

parents lack college degrees. These students are dissimilar from the students at NICC in that they are largely black.

As at any institution, the characteristics of the institution have an impact on the instructional methods which will succeed. Both NICC and the University of the District of Columbia are public institutions with relatively low tuition and an open-door policy. As Bouton and Rice (1983) contend:

> The skills deficiencies of these students may be more severe than, but not different in kind from, those of other college students. While some students need special courses on specific skills, all students need continuous practice to develop skills and abilities not provided by traditional teaching methods. (p. 32)

Procedures for Obtaining and Analyzing Literature

Research was begun with a computer search of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) files using the descriptors "community college," "method," and "composition." When this search yielded several hundred journal articles and document titles, it was apparent that some means of selection was needed to locate the most current and relevant of the available information. A search of the card catalog of the University of Northern Iowa library in the area of composition instruction and related topics located numerous books on the subject. Bibliographies of articles, documents, and books were most helpful in locating the sources which were finally selected

as most representative, most comprehensive, and most authoritative. The works of Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, White and Polin, and Hillocks were cited repeatedly in discussions of evidence from experimental research study relating to effectiveness in composition instruction. Thus the search was thorough and these studies were selected as the most current and comprehensive available.

The research on composition instruction summarized in this study was completed very recently: Hillocks' work in 1984 and 1986 and White and Polin's in 1986. The White and Polin study (1986) represents responses from 56 percent of the teachers, full- and part-time, at the 19 campuses of the University of California system. The 60 studies that met the selection criteria Hillocks (1984) used in coding the over 500 studies he examined that had been conducted between 1963 and 1982 and which he analyzed in his meta-analysis include 11,705 students--6,313 in experimental treatments and 5,392 in control treatments. As Hillocks states, "...this review attempts to examine every experimental study produced between 1963 and 1982" (p. 134).

Hillocks' ambitious review of research in the area of writing instruction was an attempt to chronicle progress in composition research since the Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Shoer survey of 485 studies yielded five cases that met the stringent screening criteria developed in their 1963 review. Over 500 titles are listed in the bibliography of Braddock et al.'s Research in Written Composition, the most

comprehensive review of research in the field up to that time.

White and Polin's five-year study, completed in 1986, was designed to study the effectiveness of writing programs at the California State University. White (1989) describes the "representativeness across large and small campuses" (p. 25) of the sample while noting that normally community colleges will have a lower percentage of faculty with doctorates teaching composition than were found in the California study (60 percent reported holding Ph.D.s).

Procedures for Surveying Faculty and Students

Upon completion of a summary of the selected research studies, surveys of composition students, general faculty, and communication faculty on the Calmar campus were conducted to answer the question of how congruent present practice is with research findings. Winter quarter composition I and II students were surveyed to assess their degree of satisfaction with the approaches and activities presently in use. General faculty were surveyed for their attitude toward writing as it relates to the educational needs of the students they teach. The five members of the communication faculty were surveyed to determine the extent to which the approaches, modes, and foci of instruction which are the focus of this study are in use by these instructors.

Definition of Terms

The following terms, defined as the researcher defined

them, will be used throughout the paper as defined below.

Mode of Instruction. Mode of instruction is defined by Hillocks (1986) as, "The role assumed by the classroom teacher, the kinds and order of activities present, and the specificity and clarity of objectives and learning tasks" (p. 113).

Focus of Instruction. Hillocks defines focus of instruction as "the dominant content of instruction, e.g., the study of model compositions, the use by students of structural feedback sheets, sentence combining, and so forth" (p. 113).

Approach to Instruction. Approach to instruction, as used in the context of this study, is defined by White (1989) as one of six patterns or broad instructional themes resulting from faculty responses to several items grouped in six categories or aspects of instruction: underlying themes, material, classroom teaching arrangements, kind and number of writing assignments required, frequency and kind of responses to student writing, and proportion of class time spent in a variety of activities.

Effect Sizes. Hillocks (1984) defines effect sizes as the score which reports a given treatment gain or loss in terms of standard score units obtained by dividing the difference between posttest scores, adjusted for the difference between pretest scores, by the pooled standard deviation of posttest scores for all groups in the study. A treatment with an experimental/control effect size of .5

standard deviations means that the gain for the average student in the experimental group is .5 standard deviations greater than for the average student in the control group.

Significance of the Study

A summary of the results of the most recent and comprehensive research on current practices and effectiveness of practices in composition instruction, as well as information about current practices in writing instruction on the Calmar campus, would be useful in making decisions. Both would assist members of the communication department and administration in reaching informed consensus regarding methodology and approach in the semester composition offerings.

Since Northeast Iowa Community College's change in status from technical institute to community college in 1988, one of the added missions of the college has been the offering of transfer credit general education courses. Transfer credit courses in composition were developed and first offered fall quarter 1988. When the required ACT ASSET Test for students entering two-year institutions showed lower than recommended writing and reading skills, students were advised to enroll in developmental or pre-transfer level courses. However, because prerequisite scores were not required for enrollment in transfer-level courses, students have been reluctant to enroll in developmental or 100-level courses. The pre-transfer 100-level course has been taught on the Calmar campus only

once. The process approach to writing instruction was adopted in the initial development of the course with emphasis on group learning methods, the use of text-based models, and a de-emphasis on grammar instruction. With the current text now out of print, selection of a replacement book reflecting the pedagogy with the greatest potential for improving writing quality is important. Underway at present is discussion of a plan to replace the present quarter schedule of offerings with a semester schedule tentatively set to begin with the 1992 fall term. The restructuring and redevelopment of the present composition offerings required by the shift from a quarter to a semester schedule offers an ideal opportunity to reevaluate methodology and instructional emphasis as well. In addition to providing data on which to base operational decisions, this research may increase the general faculty's awareness of students' multiple needs for writing skills. Completing program coursework, pursuing further liberal education, transferring to four-year institutions and entering the work force are all student goals requiring enhanced writing skills.

In the same way that decisions are made at Northeast Iowa Community College, they are made in community colleges in Iowa and across the country regarding approaches to teaching writing, course requirements, placement of students, and the most effective methods of writing instruction. As community colleges strive to meet the ever-increasing needs of the nontraditional student for both

career education and transfer-level general education, these decisions become more critical. Having a summary of research conveniently available in a document like this one will assist faculty and administrators in making educationally sound decisions.

Chapter II

Review of the Research

White and Polin's work on effectiveness in the teaching of writing will first be summarized. Then the results of Hillocks' meta-analysis and his findings relating to modes of instruction and foci of instruction will be reviewed. Last, a discussion synthesizing the findings of these two major studies and answering the four questions from the problem statement will conclude the chapter.

White and Polin

White and Polin's (1986) study surveyed teachers of remedial and regular composition on the nineteen campuses of the California State University during 1982. A total of 418 teachers completed responses to the twelve-page questionnaire constituting a 56 percent rate of return. White (1989) views the California State University as "roughly representative of most public and private institutions of higher education in the United States" (p. 39).

Researchers (White, 1989) sought responses with multiple questions in six areas of writing instruction under which they later built a classification system of six approaches to writing instruction: 1) themes as the basis of organization and sequencing of instruction; 2) materials used; 3) classroom teaching arrangements; 4) proportion of in-class time spent in each of a variety of activities; 5) kind and number of writing assignments required; and 6)

frequency of various types of responses to student writing.

Themes. Respondents rated eleven theme statements such as the following in relation to their importance to course instruction: "expose students to good literature," "allow for practice in writing activities necessary for success in other college courses," "teach invention skill,..." and "allow for in-class writing in a workshop setting" (White, 1989, p. 40). Ratings for each item could range from "very important" to "not important at all" (White, 1989, p. 40).

Materials. Eleven kinds of materials for supporting writing instruction ranging from grammar handbooks to students' own writing were listed. Respondents rated the importance of the various items to their own instruction.

Classroom Arrangements. Respondents rated the frequency with which they employed each of four instructor-student interactions: small-group work, individualized work, formal lectures, and guided discussions. Frequencies ranged along a four-point scale from "almost always " to "rarely or never."

In-Class Activities. Fourteen in-class activities that could reasonably occur in the teaching of writing were provided: writing "on a given topic" or "topics of their own choosing" or "free writing or journal writing"; discussing "upcoming assignments" or "mechanics and standard usage" or "linguistics"; as well as others. A measure of both emphasis and frequency was provided for in this factor, and responses could range from "not done in class" to "a

major activity in every class."

Assignments and Responses. Four types of writing assignments--paragraph, multiparagraph essay, report, and research paper--were listed; and respondents were asked how many of each were assigned. Seven types of responses, from letter grade to request for major revision, were listed. There was little variation in faculty reports of these two factors, and thus no strong connection could be shown with these factors and any one of the other four factors: instructional themes, materials, arrangements, or activities. Faculty uniformly reported requiring substantial quantities of writing and substantial time responding to that writing.

Analysis of the four factors--themes, materials, teaching arrangements, and in-class activities--revealed six patterns of instruction the researchers called "approaches" to writing instruction. The six patterns or approaches are as follows: the literature approach, peer workshop approach, individualized writing lab approach, text-based rhetoric approach, basic skills approach, and service course approach. Each is described below.

Each item of the questionnaire received a number termed "item weight" indicating the relative strength of that item as a member of that factor group or approach. Items with higher numbers were more characteristic of the approach than those with lower numbers.

The Literature Approach is characterized by indicators

from three of the four categories of items in the questionnaire which showed strong correlation to the approach. In-class activities category showed the item having the highest item weight (.82) for "analyzing literature" along with "analyzing prose models of composition." The prevailing instructional theme was "to expose students to good literature." The instructional materials were "individual works of literature, poetry and fiction anthologies, and poetry, fiction, and nonfiction anthologies."

The Peer Workshop Approach includes items from all four categories. Instructional themes were "to teach invention skills, such as planning, prewriting, clustering [, and] heuristics" and "to provide regular in-class writing in a workshop session." Instructional materials characteristic of this approach are the students' own writing, while classroom arrangements include "simultaneous small-group activities, during which I circulate among the working groups." The items with the most stability in this approach were found in the category of class activities: "students working with other students" and "students discussing or scoring their own papers," along with "free writing or journal writing."

The Individualized Writing Lab Approach has as its highest weight item the instructional theme "to allow for frequent in-class writing", along with "to provide regular in-class writing in a workshop setting." Classroom

arrangements were predominantly "individual work, permitting me to circulate among working students." "Writing essays on a given topic" and "working with tutors during class" are the correlating class activities.

The Text-Based Rhetoric Approach reflected the theme "to proceed developmentally through discourse modes (for example, from description to persuasion)." Instructional materials included "nonfiction anthology," "rhetoric text or style book, without handbook" and "rhetoric text or style book, handbook included." Class activities emphasized "working on or discussing material in texts on composition" and analyzing prose models of composition" (White, 1989, p. 43).

The Basic Skills Approach was characterized by the themes "to teach for competence with basic units of prose (for example, phrase, sentence, paragraph)" and "to teach correct grammar and usage." Instructional materials predominating were grammar and usage handbook, and class activities which correlated strongly were discussing mechanics and standard usage.

The instructional theme of the Service Course Approach was "to practice writing activities necessary for success in other college courses (for example, term papers)." The item in the category class activities showed the highest item weight of .76 for "discussing techniques for writing research papers." The only approach to show strong correlation with an item in the category of kinds of writing

assignments, the service approach includes an item weight of .74 for "writing a term paper or research paper."

White, in his discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, reviews the background and current status of the debate over whether or not literature should be the basis for the teaching of writing. He cites "faculty status," "academic standards," and "social class" as features of the debate over the value of the literature approach. White (1989) further concludes:

> And since the lower-status composition teaching is more time consuming and emotionally demanding than the teaching of literature and often supports financially the advanced work in literature, the resentments and defensiveness that surround the entire subject overshadow pedagogical debate. (p. 45)

White tries to strip the argument of its political aspects and cites the force of tradition and the importance of prose models as strengths which this approach offers. The opposing view, as he presents it, questions whether the study of excellent prose models will teach anything useful to students whose sense of inadequacy is already strong and whose needs for writing instruction are at a more elementary level than that presented by many literary offerings. The "attractiveness" of the literature under study may be the most serious weakness of this approach to teaching writing. Attention given to the writing of the masters diverts attention altogether from the writing of students.

According to White, the primary elements of the peer workshop approach include students working with classmates, in small groups, responding to or scoring their own writing. Instructors typically encourage prewriting activities, student choice of topic, and student-produced texts as the basis for responding and evaluating. White lists the expanded audience for student writing as an important strength. Students may be more careful in the production of work to be submitted to their classmates. Students will be more likely to learn techniques for improving their own writing process as they concentrate on helping classmates with their writing. The congenial workshop setting encourages understanding and use of the process through constructive suggestions for revision. Group work trains students for collaborative writing tasks commonly found outside the classroom. The atmosphere of the class is pleasant, teachers are relieved of extra paper-grading, students get immediate feedback, and students must become active participants in their own and others' learning.

White lists the following weaknesses: since content is limited to student writing, students in peer-workshop approach classes may suffer from failure to be challenged by consideration of the ideas of great writers and thinkers. In fact he advances the thought that this approach may be "more appropriate for a trade school than for a university" (p. 48).

The strength of the individualized writing lab

approach, according to White, "depends on steady in-class writing on an appropriate assigned topic, with the teacher circulating as an editorial coach, giving two or three minutes of commentary to each student each class" (p. 49). This approach serves to keep instructor work-loads to the level of teachers in other disciplines and assignments. Assignments must be prepared so as to be manageable in the available class time.

Weaknesses are similar to those for the peer workshop approach: provides no opportunity for reading or for longer writing assignments such as a research paper. Writing skills developed are "functional" with no emphasis on writing as "discovery or development of ideas" (p. 50).

The text-based rhetoric approach, as the name implies, derives its strength from the students' involvement with the variety of ideas from many fields introduced in the texts' essays which serve as models and examples of various structures of writing and are presented in increasing levels of complexity. The writing assigned grows from the reading and discussion of the essays in the text with the writing and evaluation by the teacher done outside the classroom.

Though White later admits his preference for this approach, he acknowledges the "theoretical uncertainty" (p. 51) of the rhetorical structures, the most popular being the four modes described by Bain (1866, cited in White, 1989) as descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive. Teachers may prefer to teach the readings and fail to

emphasize enough the teaching of writing.

While the basic skills approach is found mainly in the remedial courses, White finds little of virtue in the approach. Taking up time, providing students with work and giving "both teacher and student the illusion that something useful is going on" (p. 52) are its only redeeming features. Further he declares flatly that "the method does not work but...[by using time that could be spent in writing and reading] it actually interferes with student learning" (p. 52).

Though White labels the service-course approach as "not much used," and "never...much in fashion" (p. 53), he finds it "has strong defenders among faculty who see writing as a tool for learning in all disciplines" (p. 52). Strengths of the approach lie in the students' perceived need to know how to research a topic, take and organize notes, and provide documentation and bibliographies. Summarizing another's ideas and using other's quotations responsibly are further problems of research writing that students are motivated to make an effort to master.

Hillocks

Hillocks (1984) used the advanced and highly statistical techniques of meta-analysis to compare the results of experimental treatment studies relating to the teaching of writing conducted between 1963 and 1982. Of the more than 500 studies and dissertations located, those which met the following criteria were included in the

meta-analysis:

1) The study had to involve a treatment over a period of time which was followed by a posttest.

2) The study had to employ a scale of writing quality applied to samples of writing.

3) The study had to control for teacher bias.

4) The study had to control for variations among groups of students.

5) The study had to have employed scoring conditions that ensured validity and reliability. Using these criteria, 60 studies with 75 experimental treatments were identified from the original 500 studies examined. In brief the technique of meta-analysis allows for the reporting of the effect size of treatments in terms of standard score units. The procedure allows for comparison of results of experimental studies which otherwise would be impossible to compare.

Hillocks, after summarizing earlier research examining mode of instruction in relation to achievement in writing, adopted the three modes identified in an earlier study of his (1981). Although the 1981 study involved no measure of growth in writing skill, the identified patterns of instruction revealed clearly differentiated effects. These modes are the presentational, the environmental, the renamed natural process, and the added fourth mode, the individualized.

As Hillocks (1986) states, the characteristics of the presentational mode are as follows:

> (1) relatively clear and specific objectives, e.g., to use particular rhetorical techniques; (2) lecture and teacher-led discussion dealing with concepts to be learned and applied; (3) the study of models and other materials which explain and illustrate the concept; (4) specific assignments as exercises which generally involve imitating a pattern or following rules that have been previously discussed; and (5) feedback following the writing, coming primarily from teachers. (pp. 116-117)

Characteristics of the natural process mode include the following:

> (1) generalized objectives, e.g., increase fluency and skill in writing; (2) free writing about whatever interests the students, either in a journal or as a way of "exploring a subject"; (3) writing for audiences of peers; (4) generally to revise and rework writing; and (6) high levels of interaction among students. (Hillocks, 1986, p. 119)

Hillocks (1986) lists three assumptions about instruction which underlie the natural process mode.

> 1) writing for audiences of peers will improve writing.... 2) writing should be of the students' own choice and without the restrictions of having to use certain forms, techniques, or rhetorical conventions. (3) the teacher's role should be reactive, responding to whatever the student writes on any given occasion,

> in contrast to an active planning of instructional experiences intended to result in learning particular writing strategies. (p. 121)

Hillocks (1986) lists the following characteristics of the environmental mode:

> (1) clear and specific objectives, such as to increase the use of specific detail and figurative language; (2) materials and problems selected to engage students with each other in specifiable processes important to some particular aspect of writing; and (3) activities, such as small-group problem-centered discussions, conducive to high levels of peer interaction concerning specific tasks. (p. 122)

In the individualized mode of instruction, according to Hillocks (1984)

> ...students receive instruction through tutorials, programmed materials of some kind, or a combination of the two. The focus of instruction may vary widely, from mechanics to researching, planning, and writing papers. The chief distinction is that this mode of instruction seeks to help students on an individualized basis. (p. 126)

Following is a summary of the results of Hillocks' meta-analysis of effect sizes of experimental/control treatments for the four modes of instruction. When the rule of one mode of instruction present in the experimental treatment and another in the control was applied, 29

treatments were available for analysis of the original 75 selected. The results of the meta-analysis of these 29 treatments show that the environmental mode posted the largest mean effect size, .44, as compared to .19 for natural process, .02 for presentational, and .17 for the individualized mode of instruction.

As Hillocks (1984) summarizes, "While the differences among the presentational, natural process, and individualized modes are not significant, the environmental gain is three times the gain for the others..." (p. 149).

Foci of Instruction

The other aspect of Hillocks' investigation which bears on the questions under consideration in this paper is foci of instruction which are defined more narrowly than modes of instruction as "types of content or activities" (p. 202) which teachers believe will be beneficial to writing. The treatments, which precede writing or occur early in the process, include the study of traditional grammar, work with mechanics, the study of models to identify aspects of good writing, sentence combining, inquiry, and free writing.

When the rule was applied that one focus of instruction had to appear in the experimental treatment but not in the control treatment, 39 experimental/control treatments were included in one of the six categories. Studies were categorized by the primary focus of treatment if more than one focus was included in the experimental treatment.

Grammar and Mechanics

A treatment was coded as grammar and mechanics if it included either the study of parts of speech and sentences or gave attention to usage and punctuation through use of classroom exercises or a particular text. Subjects in groups receiving grammar and mechanics treatments scored .29 of one standard deviation below their counterparts in the no-grammar/mechanics treatment groups. Hillocks (1984) concludes, "Clearly, as with grammar, treatments including mechanics predict significantly lower qualitative change in writing than those that regard mechanics as irrelevant" (p. 156).

Sentence Combining and Construction

Sentence combining is a treatment in which practice in combining simple sentences into more complex ones results in sentences with greater T-unit length, a T-unit being a main clause and all its attendant modifiers. Five studies of sentence combining and construction met the criteria for inclusion in the meta-analysis. The mean effect size for the studies included is .35 standard deviations in favor of the groups receiving the treatment.

Models

The study of models or excellent examples of writing is still common as it was in ancient Greece. Students read and analyze these examples in order to imitate their features or emulate their characteristics. Six studies made use of models in the experimental treatment and not in the control

treatment. These studies showed a mean experimental/control effect size of .22, considerably higher than the -.29 shown by the grammar and mechanics treatments and somewhat less than the .35 shown by the sentence combining and construction treatments.

Scales

The use of scales or sets of specific criteria in the form of questions or statements in evaluating their own or others' writing is another treatment thought to be useful in learning the characteristics of good writing. Use of scales generally involved students in applying the criteria and suggesting possible revisions.

Hillocks (1984) elaborates at some length on the treatment of scales using a study by Clifford (1981) as an example. In this study college freshmen used four sets of concrete criteria in evaluating in small groups their fellow students' work. The first was applied to the initial in-class writing; the second set of criteria employed questions on sentence structure, organization, and support and was used to evaluate first drafts shared in small groups. Still a third evaluation was required when groups exchanged rough drafts. Results of these applications of criteria were then used to complete final drafts. Fully 80 percent of class time during the term was used in applying these criteria and making suggestions. The mean experimental/control effect size for the use of scales is .36 in favor of the treatment groups.

Free Writing

Free writing is a treatment which requests students to write about whatever interests them in journals which may be private or may be shared; in either case the writing is usually not graded. This freedom encourages students to discover what they have to say and to discover a personal voice in which to say it. The mean effect size for the ten treatments in this group is .16. Free writing has a stronger effect than grammar and mechanics.

Inquiry

Treatments were designated as inquiry treatments when they "presented students with sets of data (or occasionally required them to find data) and when [they] initiated activities designed to help students develop skills or strategies for dealing with the data in order to say or write something about it" (Hillocks, 1986, p. 211). The six inquiry treatments yielded a mean experimental/control effect size of .56--the highest mean effect size for any instructional focus.

Post-Writing Treatments: Revision and Feedback

Feedback, written or oral comments from teachers and/or peers about the effectiveness of a completed piece of writing, intended to improve the next writing is sometimes combined with revision. Changes in the completed text would constitute revision.

Eighteen experimental/control treatments employed a combination of peer and teacher feedback in the experimental

groups while only teacher feedback was used in the control groups. The mean effect size was .21 which shows a small advantage for peer-group feedback. Comparison also reveals that positive comments generally have positive effects on writing and negative comments have negative effects.

Thirteen studies required that students in the experimental group revise while those in the control group did not. The mean effect size for these treatments was .185.

Synthesis

In researching the question of how best to teach writing to community college freshmen, findings of two of the most current and comprehensive research projects were reviewed. The four questions posed in the statement of the problem will be answered using a synthesis of the findings summarized.

Question 1. What approaches are currently in use in the teaching of writing? White and Polin, in their 1982 survey of California State University composition teachers, identified six approaches to writing instruction in use in the nineteen-campus system: the literature approach, the peer-workshop approach, the individualized writing lab approach, the text-based rhetoric approach, the basic skills approach, and the service course approach.

Question 2. What distinguishes one approach from the other, and what is the effectiveness of each? Approaches are distinguishable by theme as the basis of organizing the

approach, by materials used, by classroom teaching arrangements, by kind and number of writing assignments required, and by proportion of class time spent in various activities. Each approach is characterized by emphasis on distinct materials such as handbooks in the basic skills approach or literature selections in the literature approach. Classroom activities vary with the approach; for example, the peer-responding approach is characterized by strong emphasis on students working together while the individualized approach is marked by students working individually to accomplish the course objectives.

The literature approach analyzes various works of literature and prose models of composition under the theme of exposing students to good literature. In the peer workshop approach, students work with one another in small groups discussing and evaluating their own writing, including free writing, under the theme of learning invention skills and heuristics. Characteristics of the individualized writing lab approach include frequent in-class writing, working with tutors in class, and individual work with the teacher giving individualized responses. The text-based rhetoric approach employs a nonfiction anthology or rhetoric text, with or without handbook, as the basis for analysis of and work on discourse modes. The basic skills approach uses grammar and usage handbooks and discussion of mechanics and usage to teach correctness and competence with phrase, sentence, and

paragraph. The service course approach focuses on discussion and practice in research paper writing which is important for success in other college courses.

No evidence regarding the relative effectiveness of the approaches was revealed by findings of the research.

Question 3. What modes of instruction are identifiable, and what are their distinguishing characteristics and relative effectiveness? Using the techniques of meta-analysis, Hillocks identified and calculated the mean effect sizes of experimental/control treatments in four modes of instruction: presentational, natural process, environmental, and individualized.

The presentational mode is distinguished by specific and clear objectives, lecture and teacher-led discussion, the study of models to explain and illustrate the concept, specific assignments which involve imitation of a pattern or following previously explained rules, and post-writing teacher feedback. The mean effect size for the treatments characterized as using the presentational mode is .02.

The natural process mode includes generalized objectives, free writing about whatever interests the student, writing for audiences of peers, reworking and revising writing, and much student interaction. The mean effect size for the treatments using the natural process mode is .19.

The environmental mode includes clear and specific objectives, materials and problems chosen to involve

students with one another in specific activities related to a particular aspect of writing, and high levels of peer interaction on specific tasks. The mean effect size of experimental/control treatments identified as using the environmental mode is .44.

The focus of writing in the individualized mode may vary widely, but instruction is provided through teacher-student conferences or with programmed materials. The mean effect size for individualized treatments is .17.

Question 4. What foci of instruction are identifiable by research and which are more effective in improving the quality of writing instruction at the college freshmen level? Hillocks divided activities which have a beneficial impact on writing into those which precede writing and those which follow writing. Those which precede include study and practice in grammar and mechanics, sentence combining, study of models, inquiry, use of scales, and free writing. Those which follow writing include revision and feedback. Table 1 shows the rank order of foci of instruction from most to least effective based on mean effect size when comparing a treatment and control group. Inquiry is clearly the most efffective foci. The next six differ from one another by the same amount (.20) as inquiry and the second most effective foci, scales, differ. Clearly, exercises in grammar and mechanics is an ineffective foci, at best, and even damaging to writing quality.

Table 1

Mean Effect Sizes of Foci of Instruction

Foci of Instruction	Mean Effect Size
Inquiry	.56
Scales	.36
Sentence Combining	.35
Use of Models	.22
Teacher/student Feedback	.21
and Revision	.185
Free Writing	.16
Exercises in Grammar and Mechanics	-.29

Note. Sizes expressed in standard deviation units.

Chapter III

Results of Surveys

As institutions grow and change, so does the practice of education in those institutions. The development of writing instruction at Northeast Iowa Community College has paralleled the progress of the institution. In Chapter III, this history will be detailed, followed by discussion of the surveys of composition students, general faculty, and communication faculty. Results of these surveys reflect the current status of writing instruction and indicate the direction of future development.

Background of the Surveys

Begun in 1967 as Area One Vocational-Technical School in Calmar, a town of about 2000, Northeast Iowa Community College still draws most of its students from the surrounding, largely rural and small-town populations. Before the recent change in status to a community college, students' training in writing extended only to the simplest business letters, resumes, and reaction paragraphs. Department chairs, supported by program faculty and advisory committees, viewed instruction in writing as, above all, practical; i.e., related to the occupation or trade in which the student was being trained. Thus, the student, who often expected to work in his/her hometown, should learn to prepare a resume--if one were even needed--to attain employment in his/her trade; write an application letter with a minimum of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical

errors; and if she/he were a nursing student, perhaps review the rudiments of library research paper writing.

Instructions to business communication teachers were explicit: no journals and no themes. Only business letters produced according to the formula prescribed by the author of the assigned text plus factual, documented business reports were considered appropriately practical vehicles for writing instruction. Most instruction in business communication focused on review of basic English and vocabulary development--list after list of sometimes program-related words--both spelling and meaning--isolated from any meaningful context. Study of the application of rules--spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage--with exams on proofreading skills were the approved curriculum for business students.

In communication skills instruction for trades and industry students, individualized instructional materials and contracted grading became the order of the day. Both provided for the most efficient development of specific minimum competencies, allowing the trainee to enter the workforce and productive employment in the shortest time possible. Several years ago a newly-hired department head, with experience in a more urban setting, announced two goals for reform in the department: students would no longer wear caps in the classroom and students would write a program-related research paper. He failed to implement either change, perhaps because the practical application to

immediate vocational goals was not readily apparent. Technical Writing, first offered in 1988, was the first course with the word writing in its title.

Changing economic and social conditions in northeast Iowa, as well as in the state, nation, and world, have resulted in a call from employers for a more literate workforce. As strong industrial labor needs crumbled, giving way to increased demands for workers in the service sector, more and more displaced and reentry workers turned to the community college for retraining. The advent of computers as a business and industrial tool also created growing demand for increased educational services for the nontraditional student population.

Against this background has come rapid and continuing change in the institution's mission and goals. From one-year diploma programs to limited college-transfer offerings, change has been the only constant. The projected offering of the associate in arts degree in 1992, with the added curriculum and more varied student population that this expansion implies, promises continuing challenges.

The process approach, on which college composition at NICC was initially based, was selected by two full-time instructors at the Calmar campus. An outline was submitted and approved by the Curriculum Committee as part of the articulation agreements with several four-year institutions. Now, instructors--whose backgrounds and teaching experiences include vocational communication skills, English as a second

language, secondary English and speech, and the Iowa Writer's Workshop--want to assure themselves, students, and administrators that the pedagogy they are using will lead to success in further education and employment for their students.

NICC has seen its mission and goals expand to better serve the educational needs of the district's residents who desire low-cost, close-to-home, transferable course offerings. As might be expected, changes have caused apprehension among faculty, students, and district residents. Do vocational students really need general education courses? Will students be successful? Will students be overwhelmed by the demands of this new coursework? Will the expenditure of time, effort, and money on general education courses lower the quality of the coursework offered in the technical areas? As one composition student wrote this year in his opinion paper:

> I think we should take the classes that will benefit us in our future careers, not classes that the administrators think we need. For example, if someone is taking a course in Auto Mechanics. [sic] Why should that individual take a class that deals with Language? Of course the person should know how to communicate, but I see no reason why he should have to go through a course he doesn't like. (Student paper, 1991)

The issue of "quality control" was raised by the Department of Education evaluators in a 1990 visit. How are course

offerings and standards "calibrated" to a similar degree of rigor and expectation when courses are taught by full-time and part-time instructors? A mechanism is not in place for coordinating efforts in the teaching of writing. Daytime courses are offered through the Agriculture, Business, and Communication Department and evening offerings through the Continuing Education Division. Both full- and part-time teachers teach the daytime courses, and part-time teachers staff the evening classes, many offered at some distance from the campus. Under these circumstances, a need exists to focus the writing faculty's attention on approaches to teaching writing which will best serve the district's student population.

In an effort to more carefully monitor and provide continuity in the work of the faculty with responsibility for delivering composition instruction, this research may serve to raise the awareness of the general faculty regarding the needs of our students for writing skill to complete present program coursework in areas such as nursing, accounting, computer technology, and management; to pursue further liberal education; to transfer to four-year institutions; and later to enter the workforce.

According to the NCA Self-Study Report 1990:

> Since development of the core has been rather recent, the College will need to continue to evaluate and refine the core to ensure that it equips students to live in modern society....Also, increased communication

> is needed with receiving institutions to evaluate student success following transfer. (p. 59)

According to the "Curriculum Committee Minutes," (November 1990):

> ...information comparing NICC students who have transferred to UNI with students from other community colleges, as well as [with] students who started their higher education at UNI [shows]...that Peosta students who transferred have had a higher GPA [at UNI] than native UNI students in all three years and that Calmar students who have transferred had GPA's that were lower by .12 and .02 respectively in 1987 and '88, and .05 points higher in the fall of '89.

The need for continued assessment of student achievement, as well as the need to complete course-guide rewriting to implement the conversion from quarter to semester offerings, makes the study of writing pedagogy appropriate for transfer-level writing students especially urgent. Selection of a text which supports the pedagogy with the greatest potential for effecting improvement in writing skill is a need which may be influenced by this research.

Results of Student Survey

As part of this assessment, students were surveyed to determine their degree of satisfaction with components of the approaches currently in use in composition courses. Thirty-nine students in five sections of College Composition

II taught by four instructors were asked to complete an opinion survey (Appendix A) in class during the eleventh week of the 12-week 1990-1991 winter quarter. Thirty-three of the possible respondents completed the survey for a response rate of 84 percent.

The 13 statements in the survey were designed to assess students' satisfaction and progress with classroom activities and approaches. Students rated their degree of agreement/disagreement using four responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Survey results are shown in Table 2.

The degree of satisfaction among the College Composition II students with the activities included was uniformly high with 96 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "I prefer using a computer for my papers." Eighty-one percent indicated benefiting from workshopping; 96 percent benefiting from conferences; and 78 percent benefiting from prewriting activities such as writing practices, inquiries, brainstorming, cubing, etc. Seventy-five percent benefited from study and discussion of the pieces in the text; 96 percent benefited from revising and editing; and 100 percent strongly agreed or agreed that they had "improved [their] writing ability in this class."

Eleven of 13 possible respondents enrolled in one section of College Composition I responded to the same survey with results summarized in Table 3. Eighty-one percent of the College Composition I students "prefer using

Table 2

Student Satisfaction with Instructional Activities in College Composition II, in Percentages (N = 33)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I need class time to work on the computer.	63	24	13	--
I have time outside of class to work on the computer.	15	33	42	9
I prefer using a computer for my papers.	90	6	3	--
I need more instruction in correctness; for instance, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, etc.	12	54	27	6
I benefited from workshopping my papers.	33	48	18	--
I could benefit from more workshopping.[a]	9	24	57	--
I benefited from conferencing my papers.	54	42	3	--
I could benefit from more conferencing.[a]	33	36	27	--
I benefited from prewriting such as practices, inquiries, brainstorming, cubing, etc.	21	57	21	--
I liked working cooperatively with others.[a]	39	36	9	--
I benefited from study and discussion of the pieces in the text.	18	57	15	9
I benefited from revising and editing my papers.	48	48	3	--
I improved my writing ability in this class.	48	51	--	--

Note. Percents do not equal 100 due to rounding.

[a]Item not rated by all respondents.

Table 3

Student Satisfaction with Instructional Activities in College Composition I, in Percentages (N = 33)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I need class time to work on the computer.	18	54	18	9
I have time outside of class to work on the computer.[a]	36	45	6	--
I prefer using a computer for my papers.[a]	81	9	--	--
I need more instruction in correctness; for instance, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, etc.	18	45	27	9
I benefited from workshopping my papers.	9	54	27	9
I could benefit from more workshopping.	18	18	63	--
I benefited from conferencing my papers.	63	36	--	--
I could benefit from more conferencing.	9	54	36	--
I benefited from prewriting such as practices, inquiries, brainstorming, cubing, etc.	18	72	9	--
I liked working cooperatively with others.	45	45	9	--
I benefited from study and discussion of the pieces in the text.	27	45	27	--
I benefited from revising and editing my papers.	45	54	--	--
I improved my writing ability in this class.[a]	63	27	--	--

Note. Percents do not equal 100 due to rounding.

[a]Item not rated by all respondents.

a computer for my papers"; 63 percent "benefited from workshopping"; 63 percent "benefited from conferencing"; 90 percent "benefited from prewriting"; 72 percent "benefited from study and discussion of the pieces in the text" 100 percent "benefited from revising and editing my papers"; and 100 percent "improved my writing ability in this class."

Student satisfaction with the status quo is further indicated by the 51 percent of College Composition II respondents who "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with "I have time outside of class to work on the computer." Sixty-six percent disagree or strongly disagree that they could benefit from more workshopping, and 75 percent agreed or strongly agreed with "I liked working cooperatively with others." On the negative side, two-thirds of the respondents registered agreement or strong agreement with the statement "I need more instruction in correctness, for instance, punctuation,...etc.", and 69 percent agreed with the statement "I could benefit from more conferencing."

Responses of the College Composition I students to these same statements were dissimilar in some respects with 81 percent agreeing that they had time outside of class to work on the computer. Sixty-three percent, almost the same percent as of the composition II students, indicated a need for more instruction in correctness; only 33 percent (as opposed to 66 percent of the composition II respondents) disagreed that they could benefit from more workshopping; 63 percent (a similar proportion) indicated agreement with

benefit from more conferencing, and 90 percent expressed liking for cooperative work.

Results of Faculty Survey

The extent to which a largely vocationally-oriented faculty with a practical view of general education might perceive the value of writing instruction three years after the implementation of transfer-level writing courses for Associate in Applied Science and Associate in Science/Career Option students would be one method of assessing the success of that effort. All general education courses are part of one of the established career education departments: Agriculture, Business, and Communication; Health and Human Services; and Industrial Technology. Faculty in these departments were surveyed in an attempt to elicit data on their perceptions of writing as it applies to the needs of students across the campus in career areas of health, agriculture, business, industrial technology and in the general education area. The survey (Appendix B) asked faculty to indicate agreement/disagreement with a series of 16 statements about various aspects of writing skill and writing instruction. In addition, they were asked to make a forced-ranking of four statements which reflect the relative value of four distinct, but not mutually exclusive, aspects of writing: writer's expression, accuracy of information, correctness of expression, and needs of the reader described by Fulkerson (1990).

Of the 47 faculty surveyed at the Calmar Campus, 27

returned completed surveys for a response rate of 57 percent. Respondents were asked to identify their responses only as to department. Eight responses were identified as being from each of the three departments, and three were unidentified. Because a cursory review of the responses tabulated by department indicated little variation among responses by department, all responses were combined in a general tabulation. Degree of agreement/disagreement with the 16 survey statements is shown in Table 4.

One hundred percent of the faculty either "strongly agree" or "agree" with 10 of the 16 statements. Of the six statements with which faculty disagreed, only one drew a response of "strongly disagree": "ability to use sources without plagiarizing is important." Two other statements drew responses of "disagree" from 7 percent of the respondents: "The audience, purpose, and writer's voice should be evident in writing" and "Using effective techniques for writing research papers is important." Three additional statements--"Writing is a creative activity," "Writing skill enhances self-esteem," and "Ability to make a clear assertion...and develop it with examples,...is important in writing,"--drew disagreement from 3 percent of the surveyed faculty.

Faculty responses to the forced ranking of statements regarding four important aspects of writing revealed that 59 percent ranked "good writing is accurate in its content" as number one or most important. Only five percent of the

Table 4
Faculty Perceptions of Writing, in Percentages (N = 27)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Writing is an important skill.	93	7	--	--
Skills in spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and formatting are important.	81	19	--	--
Using complete sentences is important.	74	25	--	--
Ability to use sources without plagiarizing is important.	70	25	--	3
Clear expression of ideas is an important writing skill.	85	14	--	--
Ability to document sources is important.	59	40	--	--
Organizing written material to reflect an order suited to the topic and purpose is important.	66	33	--	--
The audience, purpose, and writer's voice should be evident in writing.	37	55	7	--
Writing is a creative activity.	62	33	3	--
Ability to make a clear assertion/generalization and develop it with examples, facts, ...etc., is important in writing.	63	33	3	--
Writing is a learned skill.	63	37	--	--
Writing can be an important tool for learning.	70	30	--	--
The ability to use language effectively is an important skill.	77	22	--	--
Using effective techniques for writing research papers is important.	52	41	7	--
Writing skill enhances self-esteem.	56	41	3	--
Revising a rough draft is important.	55	44	--	--

Note. Percents do not equal 100 due to rounding

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respondents rated "good writing exhibits correctness of expression" as most important. Each of the other two statements "good writing reflects the honest expression of the writer: and "good writing meets the needs of the reader" were rated most important by 18 percent of the respondents.

Results of Communication Faculty Survey

Five part- and full-time communication faculty currently teaching on the Calmar campus were surveyed for their reactions to the approaches to, modes of, and foci of instruction researched. The survey (Appendix C) results show diversity of instructor reaction. Instructors were provided with brief summaries of the six approaches revealed by White and Polin's research and asked to indicate the frequency with which "my writing instruction could be characterized as using" each of the approaches. Four possible responses--always, often, occasionally, and never--were provided. Results are shown in Table 5.

Three of the five instructors reported "never" using the literature-based approach, while two of the five "occasionally" did. The text-based rhetoric approach was used "often" by three instructors, "always" by one and "occasionally" by one. Three of the five reported using the individualized lab approach "often," while two used it "occasionally." The basic skills approach was used "occasionally" by four of the teachers and "often" by one. Two instructors used the service course approach often; two used it occasionally; and one "never" used this approach.

The peer-responding approach was "always" used by three of the five instructors and "often" used by the other two.

Table 5

Communication Faculty Response to Approaches to Instruction

(N = 5)

	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
Literature	--	--	2	3
Rhetoric	1	3	1	--
Individualized	--	3	2	--
Basic	--	1	4	--
Service	--	2	2	1
Peer-responding	3	2	--	--

As Table 5 shows, the literature approach is de-emphasized, while the peer-responding approach is strongly emphasized, with the text-based rhetoric approach next most frequently used. The individualized lab approach is used more often than the basic skills approach which is used "occasionally" by the majority of teachers in this sample. The service course approach is next to least frequently used.

Instructor responses to the items regarding mode of instruction were obtained in a similar manner. A brief summary of each of Hillock's four modes--presentational, natural-process, environmental, and individualized--was

followed by a request to "characterize your mode of instruction" using the scale of four responses: always, often, occasionally, and never.

Table 6

Communication Faculty Usage of Modes of Instruction (N = 5)

	Mean effect size	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
Environmental	.44	--	3	1	1
Natural Process	.19	1	3	1	--
Individualized	.17	--	--	2	3
Presentational	.02	1	1	3	--

Frequency of responses, summarized in Table 6, show that the natural-process mode is most frequently used by Calmar Campus communication instructors, with three using the mode "often," one using it "always," and one using it "occasionally." The environmental mode was the next most frequently used mode with three using it "often," one using it "occasionally," and one "never" using it. The presentational mode is used "occasionally" by three instructors, "often" by one, and "always" by one. The individualized mode was reported to be used "occasionally" by two instructors and "never" used by three.

The brief descriptions did not include any reference to Hillocks' findings regarding the relative effectiveness of

the four modes, so presumably respondents were not influenced by results which show that the environmental approach and the natural process approach, the two reportedly used most frequently by the instructors surveyed, are also the two with the greatest effect sizes: .44 for the environmental and .19 for the natural process. Calmar Campus instructors use the natural process mode only slightly more frequently than the environmental mode, the gain for which Hillocks found to be "three times the gain for the others...." (p. 202).

Hillocks' seven foci of instruction were listed on the survey with clarifying descriptions where necessary. Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency with which each of Hillocks' seven foci of instruction were used "to facilitate student learning of writing." Four possible responses ranged from always to never.

Table 7 shows that sentence combining was least frequently used with all five reporting only occasional use or never used. Free writing was reportedly "never" used by three respondents, "often" used by one, and "occasionally" used by one. Inquiry was used somewhat more frequently with three reporting occasional use, and one each "often" and "never." Exercises in grammar and mechanics, which Hillocks found to have a negative effect, were used often by one instructor and occasionally by four others. "Scales or sets of criteria used by students to evaluate their own or other's writing" were reported to be used often by two

instructors and occasionally by three others. Though Hillocks' findings showed a .36 effect size for the use of scales, Calmar Campus instructors used this focus of instruction less frequently than models, which shows an effect size of .22. Two instructors reported "always" using models of writing, and three reported using them "often."

As Table 7 shows, teacher-feedback and student revision, activities that follow student writing rather than precede it as do Hillocks' foci of instruction, were the activities used most frequently among the five teachers surveyed. Four instructors "always" used them and one "often" used them.

Teachers reported using most frequently those foci which had lower rather than higher mean effect sizes or those which had less rather than greater potential for having a positive effect on writing quality. Revision and use of models are at the lower end of the table. Inquiry and scales, foci at the top of the table, were reportedly used occasionally or never. All five teachers surveyed felt the process approach presently in use either "always" (three) or "often" (two) is well-suited to our students' needs. All responded "no" to the statement regarding a need "to modify the outline to emphasize other approaches or methods." The communication faculty, like the general faculty and the composition students, seem satisfied with the status quo. Continued assessment of the success rate of transfer students at four-year institutions may reveal a

Table 7

Communication Faculty Responses to Foci of Instruction (N = 5)

	Mean effect sizes	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
Inquiry	.56	--	1	3	1
Scales	.36	--	2	3	--
Sentence combining	.35	--	--	4	1
Use of Models	.22	2	3	--	--
Teacher/student feedback and revision	.21 .185	4	1	--	--
Free Writing	.16	--	1	1	3
Exercises in grammar and mechanics	-.29	--	1	4	--

greater need than is presently apparent for change in composition pedagogy. The NICC communication staff, like groups of composition instructors surveyed elsewhere, find agreement on the most effective pedagogy difficult.

The following were each listed once in response to the item requesting "other methods or approaches to which attention should be given": group work, collaborative work, greater access to library resources than presently available at NICC, literature-based approach, and competence in word

processing as a prerequisite to composition. Little evidence of common concerns or a trend in approaches seems apparent.

From vocational school to community college, the development of writing instruction has paralleled the development of the institution at NICC. Student, general faculty, and communication faculty surveys help to assess the present status of writing instruction and point the way for continued growth.

Chapter IV

Discussion of Results

Results of research findings show that modes of instruction and approaches to instruction do not coincide, although similarities among them can be identified. In addition, the various foci of instruction analyzed can be seen to be inherent features of some modes of instruction and of some approaches to instruction. Surveys reveal that communication faculty vary in their use of the approaches to and modes of instruction, as well as in their use of the foci of instruction.

The extent to which the approaches to and modes of instruction are similar, including Fulkerson's (1990) and White's (1989) analyses, will be discussed followed by tables summarizing these points of correspondence in graphic form. The extent to which the instructional practices of writing faculty reflect current research findings will be examined. Conclusions will be presented and implications for practice and implications for a new curriculum outlined.

While Hillocks makes no reference to the work of White and Polin, White comments at some length on the relationship of his own findings to those of Hillocks. Fulkerson (1990) also finds similarities and differences between the findings of the two researchers.

Fulkerson (1990) identifies four philosophies of what makes writing good or the axiology of good writing: expressionist, rhetorical, formalist, and mimetic.

Expressionists value the writer, especially his revelation of himself--his honesty, integrity, and voice; rhetoricians value the audience or reader and writing which is effective in the eyes of the reader; mimeticists value accuracy of information; formalists value the formal features of the text, especially its correctness. Writing teachers, while they attend to all four features of writing, have, in the last ten years, come to "a significant consensus: the widely-held position today is a rhetorical axiology" (Fulkerson, 1990, p. 411) or a belief that writing which satisfies the reader's needs has the greatest value.

Besides a philosophy of what makes writing good, Fulkerson advances the concept that a full theory of composition must include 1) a notion of how writers create texts, or a procedural element; 2) a notion about what classroom practices will enable students to produce the type of writing valued; and lastly 3) an epistemology or "assumptions about what counts for knowledge" (p. 411). While his primary contention is that a consensus has developed with regard to axiology, or what constitutes good writing, much less agreement is evident about the appropriate pedagogy for bringing about the rhetorical writing presently considered more valuable. In fact he asserts "...our classification schemes for classroom approaches are anything but systematic" (p. 419).

Fulkerson then compares Hillocks and White under the heading "Three Schemes of Composition Pedagogy."

> I have attempted to line up what seem the closest similar approaches from the three sources, but the fit is poor, especially for Hillocks' "environmental" approach, which is probably a specialized "peer-workshop approach." And White has no slot for a "process approach" separate from peer review. Moreover, Hillocks' presentational approach is broad enough that it probably matches several of White's categories, such as "service course" and "literary." (p. 420)

He concludes by reiterating the widely-held belief that teacher agreement about what is of value in writing doesn't mean teacher agreement on the method for achieving this desired value. White's commentary on Hillocks' work further corroborates Fulkerson's view that agreement is hard to come by.

White's (1989) review of Hillocks' meta-analysis of empirical research in writing instruction is critical of the methods of meta-analysis because of the "particularly severe demands" (p. 56) made on its data citing the fact that only 60 of the 500 studies reviewed met the criteria for inclusion in the meta-analysis. While he finds his own California Project research "more reflective of reality and more useful" (p. 60), he concedes that the Hillocks work

> ...is bound to have a great deal of influence, though I think it has more to say to researchers in the field than it does to teachers. It tells writing teachers to

> avoid lectures, school grammar, and undirected or pointless assignments--which will not be news to the teachers likely to read it. (p. 60)

White sees a correspondence between Hillocks' individual mode and the California individualized writing lab approach, as well as correspondence between the natural process mode and the peer workshop approach. Fulkerson (1990) finds a similar correlation in attempting to line up the findings of White and Hillocks with regard to approaches to instruction and modes of instruction. Fulkerson, however, aligns the text-based rhetoric approach of the California study with the presentational mode.

White (1989) sees only an uncertain relationship between Hillocks' presentational and environmental modes and the other four California approaches: literary, service-based, basic skills, and text-based rhetoric. He draws a tentative correlation between the literature approach and the presentational mode and says maybe the text-based rhetoric approach and the service based approach are environmental "since they both explicitly include classroom discussion" (p. 60).

White further attacks Hillocks' conclusion on the grounds that most of the studies used younger children as subjects rather than college students. At the same time he concedes that the studies included 6,313 students in experimental groups and 5,392 in control groups, certainly an adequate sample size from which to draw conclusions.

While White and Polin's (1986) research revealed six approaches to writing instruction, no statistical evidence was offered as to the comparative effectiveness of the approaches. The points at which the approaches correspond with the modes and the foci of instruction provide some insight into the effectiveness of the approaches. The natural-process and environmental modes and the peer-workshop approach appear to exhibit the greatest similarity of features. All three emphasize small-group activities, student-centered in-class writing, reworking of writing, and writing for peers. The literature approach, with its emphasis on analysis of literary works as models, and the presentational mode, with emphasis on lecture, teacher-led discussion, study of models, and largely teacher-feedback on writing, have many features in common. The text-based rhetoric approach emphasizes rhetorical models of specific types of writing which bear a strong resemblance to the rules or patterns students are taught to imitate in the presentational mode. Both White and Fulkerson suggest a high degree of correspondence between the individualized mode and the individualized writing lab approach. The service course and basic skills approaches are allied more tenuously with the presentational mode.

Table 8 shows in graphic form the points at which modes of instruction correspond with approaches to instruction. The environmental mode, with emphasis on specific materials and problems planned to involve students with one another in

specific processes important to writing, offers the greatest opportunity for the use of inquiries and scales as foci of instruction. Inquiries, scales, and the environmental mode, with effect sizes of .56, .36. and .44 respectively, appear to be the pedagogies with the highest potential for improving quality of writing. Sentence combining (fourth ranked) is a focus with strong potential for improving writing that could be used productively in place of direct instruction in grammar and mechanics. The use of models is a strong component of the literature and text-based rhetoric approaches and the presentational mode. The service approach also depends on the model of the research paper as a focus of instruction.

Table 8

Correspondence of Approaches to Instruction and Modes of Instruction

	Hillock's Modes			
White and Polin"s Approaches	Presentational	Natural-process	Environmental	Individualized
Literary	x			
Text-based Rhetoric	x			
Peer Workshop		x	x	
Service	x			
Basic Skills	x			
Individualized				x

Key: x = point of correspondence

Free writing, at the lower end of the ranking of foci, is a prominent feature of both the natural-process mode and

the peer workshop approach. A staple of the the basic skills approach, direct instruction in grammar and mechanics has a negative effect on writing, (-.29) taking time away from meaningful writing activity.

Teachers using all approaches in White's survey uniformly reported assigning substantial amounts of writing and spending substantial amounts of time in responding to that writing. Teacher-feedback and revision are among the foci at the lower end of the scale of mean effect sizes. Peer responding, on the other hand, a feature of the peer workshop approach and the environmental mode, shows more potential for improving writing quality than teacher-response. Table 9 shows in graphic form the foci of instruction as features of the modes of instruction and the approaches to instruction.

Based on my analysis, NICC writing faculty are using the modes and approach with the greatest potential for improving writing quality, and students are satisfied that they have improved their achievement in writing. Communication staff report using the peer workshop approach and the natural-process and environmental modes, the modes with the highest mean effect sizes, most frequently. Composition students surveyed reported very high levels of satisfaction with workshopping, conferencing, prewriting exercises, and cooperative work, activities typical of the peer workshop, the environmental, and the natural-process pedagogies.

Table 9

Foci of Instruction in Approaches to Instruction and Modes of Instruction

	Hillock's Foci of Instruction					
White and Polin's Approaches	Grammar and Mechanics	Sentence combining	Free writing	Inquiry	Scales	Models
Literary						x
Text-based Rhetoric						x
Peer Workshop			x	x	x	
Service	x					x
Basic Skills	x					
Individualized	x					
Hillock's Modes						
Presentational	x					x
Natural-process			x			
Environmental				x	x	
Individualized	x					x

Key: x = focus is feature of approach or mode

Approaches and modes with less potential for influencing writing quality positively are reportedly less used by writing staff. The literature approach is infrequently used by Calmar Campus writing teachers, though the presentational mode is reportedly used somewhat more often. Interest in the literature approach is likely to grow as the College moves toward increased offerings in the humanities areas. The text-based rhetoric approach is reportedly used second most frequently after the peer workshop approach. NICC writing teachers showed a good deal

of diversity in reported use of the mode and the approach having the greatest congruence. Survey results show an almost even split between "often" and "occasionally" for the individualized approach and between "occasionally and "never" for the individualized lab approach. The service approach is reportedly used more frequently than the basic skills approach by NICC writing faculty. These results are what might be expected, given the recency of the transfer level offerings in general education and the school's traditional emphasis on vocational career-related offerings. Individualized and basic skills approaches have a long tradition at NICC, while the need for writing skill to be successful in other courses has been less evident. The literature-based approach may have greater appeal and relevance as NICC moves toward the offering of the associate in arts degree.

However, survey results regarding use of foci of instruction show that NICC writing faculty are generally not using the foci with the greatest potential for improving writing quality. Teachers report using inquiries on the average only occasionally and scales somewhat more often. Sentence combining is at the lower end of the scale of use by Calmar Campus teachers with usage reported as only occasional or never. This focus with strong potential for improving writing, could replace direct instruction in grammar and mechanics since it can be used easily with a variety of approaches and modes.

At the same time, student survey results do not corroborate research findings on effectiveness of foci of instruction. Models is the second most frequently used foci reported by Calmar writing teachers. Students also report a high degree of benefit from study of models or pieces in their text. However, use of literary masterpieces as models could be intimidating, especially to underprepared students. Teacher-feedback and revision are the most frequently used of the foci, and students report a very high degree of benefit from revising activities and a desire for more teacher-feedback in conferencing. Free writing is by and large never used by NICC writing teachers.

Direct instruction in grammar and mechanics, with its potential for negative impact on writing quality, is reportedly used only occasionally by the majority of NICC communication teachers. Two-thirds of the students surveyed agreed that more instruction in correctness (grammar and mechanics) would be beneficial. These results support one another: that teachers are not providing direct instruction in grammar and mechanics may be the reason students feel they would benefit from more of this most-traditional of English classroom activities, though research refutes this conclusion. This belief in the benefit of more instruction in grammar and mechanics may also reflect the insecurity, apprehension, and lack of academic preparation with which nontraditional students return to school. In spite of this desire for more instruction in correctness, students are

generally positive about their accomplishments in writing as the survey shows.

Conclusions

A review of current research on writing instruction leads to the following conclusions:

1. Six approaches are identifiable as still in use in teaching writing: literature approach, text-based rhetoric approach, peer workshop approach, service course approach, basic skills approach, and individualized approach.

2. The environmental mode of instruction, with a .44 mean effect size, offers the greatest potential for improving writing--more than the natural-process, individualized, or presentational modes.

3. Foci of instruction most likely to lead to improved writing skill are inquiry techniques, use of scales, sentence combining, models, and peer-responding; with less improvement likely using free writing and teacher-only feedback and revision; and negative effects likely using direct instruction in grammar and mechanics.

Implications for Practice

While all six approaches are in use in composition classrooms at NICC, the basic skills approach, with its strong reliance on direct instruction in correctness in grammar and mechanics, is useless at best and detrimental at worst as a means of improving writing skill. Even in developmental courses, where the basic skills approach would seem a logical one, repeating direct instruction in grammar

and mechanics for students who have experienced it in numerous previous classes at all levels of their education is unlikely to lead to improved writing skill. As a method for improving proofreading skills, especially for business students, it may have some value. Only five percent of the general faculty surveyed considered correctness of expression most important.

The service course approach, with its focus on a single type of writing, the research paper, has limitations as well. Writing Across the Curriculum projects, in which there is growing interest, are in danger of being viewed only as a means to incorporate research writing into program or discipline-specific courses. This service course approach to Writing Across the Curriculum can limit the discovery function of writing and writing as a means to developing critical thinking.

The drawbacks of the literature approach as a pedagogy for improving writing need to be weighed carefully in any decision to move toward that method. Nontraditional, i.e., underprepared and apprehensive, students, especially, may find modeling their writing on that of the masters intimidating. Focus on student writing may be replaced by a disproportionate emphasis on the literary selections.

Peer workshop, text-based rhetoric, and individualized approaches include features such as use of models, emphasis on student writing, and small-group activities which correspond to those of the modes with the greatest potential

for improving writing. Foci of instruction presently in use such as models, peer-responding, and teacher-feedback, have potential for improving student writing.

Surveys of students in all sections of College Composition I and II indicate a high level of satisfaction with the status quo. They agree unanimously that they have improved their writing ability and to a lesser extent that they have benefited from workshopping (peer response), conferencing (teacher feedback), study of pieces in the text (models), prewriting activities (inquiries), and revising and editing. Further support for the status quo is shown by the high percentage of student disagreement with the statement that more workshopping would be beneficial, (66 percent for composition II students and 33 percent for composition I students). At the same time, most students liked cooperative work which suggests that increasing the use of inquiries and scales, in other words the number of in-class, structured, writing-related, cooperative activities, would be likely to meet with student acceptance. Increased use of the strategies of the environmental mode, i.e., specific problem-centered activities relating to identifiable aspects of writing requiring a good deal of student interaction will increase the potential for improvement in quality of student writing. Continued de-emphasis of features of the presentational mode such as lecture, teacher-led discussion, and primarily teacher-feedback on writing will likely continue to result

in greater achievement in student writing. Faculty are presently using models, peer-responding, and teacher-feedback extensively.

As with White's findings that a good deal of writing and responding is being done with all approaches, the overall impression from the student survey is that students feel they are writing extensively and increasing their sense of competence in the skill. This emphasis should continue. As White suggested, the use of the peer-response approach, which has many similarities to Hillocks' environmental approach, is well suited for increasingly nontraditional students at an institution in transition from a vocational school to a community college. Though these students are often apprehensive about their abilities as they begin the study of composition, they conclude with positive feelings about their progress.

Implications for a New Curriculum

As decisions are made at NICC regarding the implementation of the Associate in Arts degree, the conversion of quarter courses to semester offerings, and selection of a text for campus-wide use, findings of the current research on approaches to composition instruction and modes and foci of instruction need to be implemented. A stronger emphasis on the literature approach in teaching writing should not be initiated if the goal is to improve writing of nontraditional students. A stronger emphasis on the direct instruction of grammar and mechanics, even in the

developmental and 100-level courses, will not result in improved skill in writing.

The environmental mode of instruction, with its emphasis on the use of inquiries and scales to engage students with one another in specific processes related to writing, offers the greatest potential for improving students' quality of writing. Students are satisfied with the process approach which affords them opportunity to work cooperatively, and receive peer- and teacher-feedback, with a focus on their own writing. The increased use of strategies of the environmental mode will allow for more student interaction in learning, from which nontraditional students benefit and with which they are satisfied. In addition, the strategies of the environmental mode, which require group problem solving and application of criteria, offer potential for enhancing the teaching of critical thinking skills, an area of growing concern across all disciplines. Use of an accompanying sentence combining text rather than a grammar handbook would provide greater potential for improving writing skill as well.

The general faculty perceive writing skill as important for their students, and the students agree that they are gaining competence in their writing classes. Improving student performance in writing is widely regarded as a vital task of the community college. Implementing strategies of writing instruction based on the findings of this research can lead to improvement in student writing achievement.

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Appendix A

College Composition Survey
February 1991

Please use the scale below and the accompanying Scantron form to record your responses to the following statements.

A Strongly agree
B Agree
C Disagree
D Strongly disagree

____1. I need class time to work on the computer.

____2. I have time outside of class to work on the computer.

____3. I prefer using a computer for my papers.

____4. I need more instruction in correctness; for instance, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, etc.

____5. I benefited from workshopping my papers.

____6. I could benefit from more workshopping.

____7. I benefited from conferencing my papers.

____8. I could benefit from more conferencing.

____9. I benefited from prewriting such as practices, inquiries, brainstorming, cubing, etc.

____10. I liked working cooperatively with others.

____11. I benefited from study and discussion of the pieces in the text.

____12. I benefited from revising and editing my papers.

____13. I improved my writing ability in this class.

Appendix B

February 28, 1991

Calmar Campus Faculty

REQUEST TO COMPLETE SURVEY OF WRITING PERCEPTIONS

As part of my work on the research paper required for the Master's degree at UNI, I am surveying the Calmar Campus faculty regarding their perceptions of writing.

Would you take five or ten minutes to complete the attached survey and return it to me as you leave this morning or to your department secretary this afternoon?

Should you have questions, please ask. Thank you for your help.

Karen Lee

Attachment

Faculty Perceptions of Writing

Please use the scale below to record your responses to the following 16 statements as they apply to the students you teach. (Do not sign your name, but please indicate your department by checking one of the blanks below.)

___Industrial Technology ___Health ___Ag, Bus, Comm.

A Strongly agree
B Agree
C Disagree
D Strongly disagree

_____1. Writing is an important skill.

_____2. Skills in spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and formatting are important.

_____3. Using complete sentences is important.

_____4. Ability to use sources without plagiarizing is important.

_____5. Clear expression of ideas is an important writing skill.

_____6. Ability to document sources is important.

_____7. Organizing written material to reflect an order suited to the topic and purpose is important.

_____8. The audience, purpose, and writer's voice should be evident in writing.

_____9. Writing is a creative activity.

_____10. Ability to make a clear assertion/generalization and develop it with examples, facts, details, and other means of support is important in writing.

_____11. Writing is a learned skill.

_____12. Writing can be an important tool for learning.

_____13. The ability to use language effectively is an important skill.

_____14. Using effective techniques for writing research papers is important.

_____15. Writing skill enhances self-esteem.

_____16. Revising a rough draft is important.

Rank the following statements about writing from 1 to 4 using # 1 to indicate the most important feature and # 4 to indicate the least important feature.

_____Good writing exhibits correctness of expression.

_____Good writing reflects the honest expression of the writer.

_____Good writing meets the needs of the reader.

_____Good writing is accurate in its content.

Please add any comments you wish.

Appendix C

February 19, 1991

Communication Faculty

SURVEY OF APPROACHES TO WRITING INSTRUCTION

I am completing a research paper required for the Master's degree at UNI. As a part of that project, I am surveying the members of our staff regarding approaches to writing instruction presently in use.

Would you complete the attached survey and return it to me by Friday if possible?

If you have questions, please ask. Thank you for your help.

Karen

Attachment

Survey

Approaches to Writing Instruction

White (1989) and Polin's survey revealed the following six approaches to writing instruction:

1. Literature-based approach--Writing assignments grow out of the literature being discussed.

2. Basic skills approach--Grammar, mechanics, and usage are taught along with writing of correct sentences and paragraphs.

3. Text-based rhetoric approach--Uses various types of nonfiction writing as models for writing instruction.

4. Individualized lab approach--Provides workshop setting for in-class writing with individualized help.

5. Service-course approach--Teaches research and term paper writing techniques needed to be successful in other college courses.

6. Peer-responding approach--Features include teaching invention skills, frequent in-class writing, and students working with one another discussing their own writing.

Use the scale below to respond to the following numbered items:

A Always
B Often
C Occasionally
D Never

My writing instruction could be characterized as using the

_____1. Literature-based approach
_____2. Text-based approach
_____3. Individualized approach
_____4. Basic skills approach
_____5. Service course approach
_____6. Peer-responding approach

Hillocks describes four modes of instruction:

Presentational mode characterized by specific objectives, lecture and discussion, the study of models of writing, writing assignments which imitate a pattern or follow previously taught rules, and teacher feedback.

Natural-process mode features general objectives, free writing, writing for peers, reworking of writing, and much student interaction.

Environmental mode features specific objectives, materials and problems which necessitate student interaction in a specific process important to some aspect of writing, and activities leading to high levels of student interaction.

Individualized mode delivers instruction individually through programmed materials or tutorials.

Please characterize your mode of instruction using the scale below.

A Always
B Often
C Occasionally
D Never

_____7. Presentational
_____8. Natural-process
_____9. Environmental
_____10. Individualized

I use the following means or activities to facilitate student learning of writing: (Use the scale above.)

_____11. Exercises in grammar and mechanics, i.e., study of parts of speech, sentences, usage, and/or punctuation.

_____12. Sentence combining

_____13. Models of writing

_____14. Scales or sets of criteria in question or statement form used by students to evaluate their own or other's writing.

_____15. Free writing in journals

_____16. Inquiry or sets of data presented to students for their use in developing skill in dealing with the data.

_____17. Teacher feedback and student revision

The course description for College Composition I and II characterizes the course as using the "process approach" including the following: prewriting, drafting, workshopping, conferencing, revising, and editing. (Use the scale above.)

_____18. This approach is well-suited to our students' needs.

_____19. A need exists to modify the outline to emphasize other approaches or methods. (Yes or No)

20, Please list other methods or approaches to which attention should be given.